

*The Consideration of our Latter End recommended,  
as the means of obtaining true Wisdom.*

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A  
S E R M O N

PREACHED AT

B R O M S G R O V E,

On Occasion of the

D E A T H

O F

Mr. *J O H N S P I L S B U R Y*;

W H O

Died the 27th of *J a n u a r y*, 1769, in the 75th  
Year of his Age.

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By *T H O M A S T Y N D A L*.

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*B I R M I N G H A M*:

Printed by *J O H N B A S K E R V I L L E*.

*M D C C C X I X*.



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## ADVERTISEMENT.

**T**HE following Discourse, is now published, as it was at first composed and delivered, at the earnest request of the Widow and Family of the Deceased; who wished to preserve it as a memorial of their friend; and hoped at the same time that the plain but important truths contained in it, might be of some service to the candid and well-disposed reader. The principal aim of the Preacher was to serve the interest of vital and practical religion amongst his hearers; to engage them to live in this world as those who must shortly die out of it; and to behave like persons who know they must give an account of themselves before God. And if the discourse, now it appears in print, should answer, in any degree, the same valuable purposes to those into whose hands it may come, the Author will sincerely rejoice.

## ADVERTISEMENT.

THE following Discourse, is now published, as it was at first composed and delivered, at the earnest request of the Widow and Family of the late Mr. who with his wife and children, a memorial of their friend, and hoped at the same time that the plan of an important mission contained in it might be of some service to the candid and well-disposed reader. The principal aim of the Teacher was to leave the interest of civil and political religion amongst his hearers; to engage them to begin this world as those who will shortly die out of it; and to behave like persons who know they must give an account of themselves before God. And if this may, now it appears in print, be of service in any degree to the same virtuous purposes to which the same hands have been devoted, the Author will himself rejoice.

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DEUT. xxxii. 29.

*O that they were wise: that they understood this:  
that they would consider their latter end!*

**Y**OU are no strangers to the solemn occasion of the ensuing discourse, viz. the death of our late worthy Friend and Fellow-Christian, Mr. JOHN SPILSBURY: whose memory will be ever dear to those of his most intimate acquaintance, who knew him from the beginning; and are therefore able to form the best judgment of his character, as a Christian and a Gentleman. In the course of my conversation with him, I have often heard him speak in praise of funeral sermons and orations at the interment of the dead: not so much as affording the preacher a commodious opportunity of doing honour to the memory of the deceased; as because he hoped they might be serviceable to the living; by leading them into serious reflections on the

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brevity and uncertainty of human life, and engaging them in a diligent preparation for death and eternity.—It was therefore judged proper by survivors, that (in conformity to the sentiments of the deceased) a funeral discourse should be preached on account of his dissolution. And as they have thought proper to appoint me to that service, I shall do what I can to render it subservient to (that which ought to be the great end of all preaching) the advancement of real and practical religion: which important purpose will, I apprehend, be most effectually promoted by serious meditations upon death, and the solemnities which shall succeed it. I have with this view chosen the words of the text, *O that they were wise: that they understood this: that they would consider their latter end!*

They were the words of Moses, the ancient and venerable prophet, and law-giver of the Jews; when he was directing the attention of that people to the events of providence in relation to them; and have often been adopted by divines, as a proper subject of discourse upon the removal of a friend, or fellow-mortal from this world to another: because death puts  
an

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an end to the existence of all men, considered as dwellers upon earth, and introduces them to a new, an eternal state.

That I may assist you in a due improvement of the passage now before us, I shall

I. Consider what is implied in the idea of true wisdom.

II. I shall endeavour to shew, that Consideration is a suitable and necessary means of attaining this wisdom; and more especially that branch of consideration, which leads us to contemplate our latter end, and seriously and heartily to prepare for its approaches.

I. I am to consider what is implied in the idea of true wisdom.

This will appear very needful, if we reflect, that there are various kinds of that which with men is called wisdom. Such as, a profound knowledge of the productions of divine skill in the heavens and the earth:—A familiar acquaintance with arts and sciences, so useful and ornamental to society:—The knowledge of the dif-

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ferent manners and customs of the different people who dwell on the face of the globe:—The prudent conduct of any particular branch of trade, in which a man is engaged for the support and more agreeable accommodation of himself, family and friends:—Above all, the knowledge of the affairs of government, or a sagacity in politics, has been deemed wisdom by the men of this world; whose aims and pursuits are directed to the acquisition of those pleasures, riches and honours, which this world only can afford them.

All these, how profitable soever they may be to individuals and the public, are not worthy to be compared with that wisdom which I would recommend to your cultivation: which consists in proposing the best and most excellent ends to ourselves, and in steadily pursuing those means, which reason and the holy scriptures point out for the attainment of them. And if the best and most excellent ends, we can propose to ourselves, are the glory of God, the universal parent and agent, and the highest felicity our natures are capable of, (as certainly they are, because reason and scripture both approve of them as such,) then

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then it is plain, that to be truly wise, a man must be truly religious. According to that passage, so much, and so justly admired in the book of Job, "And unto man he said, Behold, the fear of the Lord, that is wisdom; and to depart from evil is understanding\*." Solomon likewise conveys the same sentiment to us, at the end of his book of Ecclesiastes; after he had taken the most accurate survey of human life, and made the strictest enquiry after what is good for man, considered as a compound being, and in possession of a reasonable and immortal soul, as well as a perishing and mortal body: "Let us hear, says he, the conclusion of the whole matter," the sum and substance of all his diligent enquiry, and large experience: "Fear God, and keep his commandments; for this is the whole of man," his whole business, perfection, and happiness. True wisdom and religion then appear to be one and the same thing.

Would you have a more particular account of this most worthy object of our attention?—It is such a sense of the exist-

\* Job xxviii. 28.

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ence and providence of the ever blessed God, and of the importance and excellency of his most holy laws, as, entering into the soul of man, makes a thorough change in his dispositions, and directs the whole course of his life and conversation; teaching him to abound in all the fruits of piety towards God, righteousness and charity to mankind; and to govern himself by those personal virtues, which are so wisely framed to promote the health and vigour of the body, as well as the peace and happiness of the immortal mind. This is true wisdom; the wisdom which is from above; which as far excels all mere human wisdom, as light excels darkness.

What an amiable representation does the apostle James give of this celestial wisdom, in the third chapter of his epistle! "It is first pure, then peaceable, gentle and easy to be entreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy." Can any thing be more excellent, more deserving of our highest regard? This is that wisdom which Solomon describes, like a great and generous princess, approaching her subjects with innumerable rich and precious gifts in  
her

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her hands. "Length of days is in her  
"right hand, in her left are riches and ho-  
"nour; her ways are ways of pleasant-  
"ness, and all her paths are peace\*."  
Hear instruction and be wise therefore, O  
ye children of men, and attend to know  
understanding. Whatever else may oc-  
casionally strike your fancy, and engage  
your pursuits, while you continue in this  
imperfect state; I know assuredly, that  
wisdom is the principal thing; the one  
thing needful for you: be exhorted then to  
get wisdom: yea, though it should be at the  
expence of every thing else, delay not to  
purchase understanding. So shalt thou  
walk in thy way safely; (with great secu-  
rity and confidence;) and thy foot shall  
not stumble at those blocks or impedi-  
ments, which cause the wicked even to  
fall: when thou liest down upon thy bed,  
to take that repose which is necessary for  
the refreshment of thy nature, thou shalt  
not be afraid of evil accidents: yea, thou  
shalt lie down with great composure, un-  
der the protection of an ever-wakeful, om-  
niscient, all-powerful God; and thy sleep  
shall be sweet.

\* Prov. iii. 16, 17.

And

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And whosoever he be among you, who lacks the wisdom which I am now recommending, who is sensible of his poverty and wretchedness without it, and solicitous to obtain it above all things; let him follow the advice of inspiration; "Let him ask of God, who giveth liberally to all, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him\*." For all wisdom cometh from the Lord; and is with him for ever. With the most profound humility and self-abasement prostrate thyself before the throne of grace; and earnestly beseech the father of spirits, the only wise, living, and true God, that he would send wisdom out of his holy habitation, and from the throne of his glory; and cause her to dwell in thy heart and mind; that she may be a companion to thee in all thy labours under the sun, and guide thee in all thy ways. So shall thy works be acceptable to the Almighty, and the tokens of his favour shall flow down upon thee in a copious, uninterrupted stream. Thou shalt prosper in the work of thy hands, so far as prosperity is good for thee; and thy glory and felicity shall be immortal: for wisdom

\* *Jam. i. 5.*

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is the brightness of the everlasting light, the image of goodness ineffable: the light of it can never be extinguished; and its incomparable beauties shall never, never decay.

Having thus considered the nature and excellency of true wisdom, and endeavoured to recommend it to your cultivation: I proceed,

II. To propose Consideration as a suitable and necessary means of attaining it. In which general head of discourse, I shall, in a particular manner, recommend that branch of consideration, which leads us to contemplate our latter end; and seriously, and heartily to prepare for it.

Now as it is very evident that the things of religion, are by far the most worthy objects of the contemplation of a reasonable and immortal soul; our concern in them must be infinitely great; and it becomes us (who are better instructed than the beasts of the earth, and created wiser than the fowls of heaven,) to make them the great objects of our attention, and to pry into them with a studious care, and unwearied per-

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severance

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severance ; as ever we hope to experience those sublime and lasting pleasures, which our natures incessantly pant after ; but which we seek in vain from any other objects.

You will ask perhaps, what the objects are, which Religion proposes to our consideration ; and which are so essential to our felicity. I answer, they are many and great. Too many and too great to be particularly enumerated at this time. I shall just remind you of a few weighty materials for thought and reflection upon this subject ; leaving you to meditate upon them in your retirements, and to make what addition to them you shall judge proper.

Religion then proposes to us the consideration of the Being and Providence of God, the Creator of all things visible and invisible, and the righteous Governour of the world : of his infinite Power, Wisdom and Goodness ; his perfect Understanding and Knowledge ; his Equity, Truth and Faithfulness ; with whatever other natural or moral attributes we are capable of knowing, and which exist in the eternal mind :—— It  
fixes

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fixes our attention upon his great and glorious Works; so admirably framed as to admit of no addition, or diminution. — It more especially leads us to reflect upon, and adore Him as *our* Creator; the father of our spirits, and former of our bodies: who gave and continues to us our reasonable powers, our moral faculties, our social instincts, and benevolent propensions: as our gracious Preserver, and most bountiful Benefactor; who compasses us about with his favour, covers us with the wings of his protection, and provides in a most generous manner for the supply of our various wants. Whose mercy began with our existence, and has flowed on with it in a succession of favours, as numerous and uninterrupted, as the moments of which our lives have been made up.

When we reflect upon these things but for a moment, do not our hearts overflow with the most lively gratitude to the ever blessed God as our creator and preserver? And are we not constrained to cry out in the extatic language of the Psalmist? “ Bless the Lord, O my soul, and all that is within me, bless his holy name.

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Once more, religion proposes to our consideration the scheme of redemption by Jesus Christ; who, when the world was overspread with darkness and the shadow of death, brought life and immortality to light. So amazingly great and glorious was the plan of redemption, that angels desired to pry into it. Such illustrious displays of wisdom and goodness, as the Gospel revelation abounds in, are contemplated still with wonder by those blessed spirits, who surround the throne of God, and who, when the saviour condescended to visit the earth, accompanied him with loud and joyful acclamations: Saying, with one harmonious voice, "Glorify to God in the highest: peace on earth: and good-will to men." And shall *we* be insensible to the glad tidings of salvation, which were published to the world by the illustrious Son of God? We who are so nearly concerned in the redemption? for whose sake the great Redeemer subjected himself to the most grievous pains and persecutions; and suffered the most ignominious Death? forbid it, all-gracious heaven!

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All these which I have just hinted at, and which Religion proposes to our consideration, are (you will readily allow) worthy objects of our closest attention. And if we seriously revolve them in our minds, and suffer them to have their due influence upon our lives, they will not fail to make us truly wise and happy: especially if we add to them,

The serious and frequent consideration of our latter end. Death and Judgment are before us. And it becomes us, as we hope to disarm the one of its sting, and to receive a sentence of applause at the other, often to think of them, and diligently to prepare for their approaches.

I. Death is before us: and if we would be truly wise, we must seriously and frequently think of our dissolution, and prepare for it.

The body, that frail mansion of clay, we now inhabit, being subject to various infirmities and diseases, by which it is frequently interrupted in the due and regular exertion of its powers—who can wonder, that it should be liable also to decay  
and

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and death? Are not pains and sicknesses the harbingers of our dissolution? Are they not sent to put us in mind how frail we are? how soon we must bid the world farewell, and go to our beds of dust?—Whether our dissolution shall be sudden, or slow; easy, or painful; natural, or violent; in youth, or in age, we know not: neither can we tell by what disorder, when, or where we shall make our exit. This knowledge belongs to an omniscient God; who has the times and seasons in his own power. But we know assuredly, that by one means or other he will lead us to death. That sooner or later we must all lie down in the grave; and take up our abode in that house which is appointed for all the living. The gates of death must be passed by the best of men, before they arrive at paradise, and taste of the fruit of the tree of life. All are of the earth, and shall return to earth again. That which befalleth a beast, befalleth also the sons of men; as the one dieth so dieth the other. So that in this respect, (in relation to the frail and perishing nature of the body) a man hath no preheminance above a brute creature.

But

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But reason and scripture both inform me, that I am possessed of a soul, which shall never die. The soul appears to be of a very distinct nature from the body; and is very different in its operations. The one is of the earth, and tendeth downwards. The other of a divine original, and pants after things which are above. The soul ascends therefore, when the body descends.

You perceive by this, that death to a good man, is only a remove from one world to another, and a better: an exchange of the society and conversation of mortal men, for a divine intercourse with God and angels, and the spirits of departed saints. For this reason it is, that the greatest and best of men have spoke of it with so much composure, and even with sacred joy and triumph. Instead of betraying any signs of perturbation and confusion, what calmness and serenity does the Apostle Peter discover, when he speaks of his latter end. "Knowing (says he) that  
" I must shortly put off this my tabernacle;  
" even as the Lord Jesus Christ hath shew-  
" ed me. \*" And this too (as he intimates

\* 2 Peter i. 14.

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in this passage) when he knew assuredly, *by what manner of death he should glorify God*: when he was previously informed by his divine master, that he should die, not a natural and easy, but a violent, painful and ignominious death, the death of the cross; the death which Jesus himself had endured.

With what exultation likewise does the glorious Apostle of the Gentiles speak of his passing out of time into eternity, before he suffered martyrdom for the Christian cause! \* I am now ready to be offered: and I may well conclude from my age and circumstances, that my departure out of this life is near at hand: I have fought a good fight; maintaining my ground against every opposing foe: I have finished my Christian, and ministerial course: I have also endeavoured to preserve the Faith as free from additions and corrupt mixtures as possible; that it may appear in its own native simplicity and beauty. As to what remains, I can assuredly say, there is laid up, in safe custody for me, a crown of righteousness; which the Lord,

\* 2 Tim. iv. 6, 7, 8.

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the righteous Judge will give me in that day; that great and important day which is appointed for a general judgment.—

“ O blessed, blessed Apostle! (may we say  
“ with an excellent author) who could look  
“ upon the pouring forth of his blood, as  
“ the libation of a sacrifice of thanksgiv-  
“ ing; on which he could call for the con-  
“ gratulations of his friends, rather than  
“ their condolence: who could weigh  
“ anchor, put off from these mortal shores,  
“ and set sail for eternity with a triumphant  
“ shout!”

Is it so with wicked men, or with the enemies of Christ and his gospel, when they approach the verge of eternity? Does death appear to them in the same point of view, when they apprehend themselves drawing near to the borders of the grave? No, it cannot be. There is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked. They are entire strangers to that tranquility of mind, and heart-felt satisfaction, which springs from a virtuous conscioufness, and a sense of the favour and love of God. Strangers to it all their lives; even in the days of health and prosperity; whatever appearances there may be to the contrary. How then

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can it be supposed that peace and comfort should accompany them in the near prospect of their dissolution? Their natures will indeed stand most in need of comfort when they come to the close of life. But alas! it shall then be farthest from them. For want of the retrospect which St. Paul was able to take; for want of the testimony of a good conscience, which he tells us was his rejoicing, they shall not be able to look downwards to the grave, without trembling; nor to think of a judgment to come, without horror.—An unpleasing idea that of death to a man who hath doated on the things of this life, and sought for happiness in heaping up riches. When the king of terrors approaches him, all his treasures will not purchase a moment's respite; nor contribute in the least to allay the agonies of dissolving nature. Die he must, as well as the poor man, and leave his riches behind him.—How bitter must the remembrance of death likewise be to the man of pleasure! who has lived in the unrestrained gratification of his appetites and passions: who speaks to his soul in the language of the fool in the parable: “Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years: eat, drink and be merry.”—No wonder that these men  
recoil

recoil at the thoughts of leaving the present world ; because there are no objects beyond the grave suited to their genius, or inclination. Should the miser and the sensualist be admitted to dwell with God, and Angels, and the spirits of just men made perfect, they would meet with nothing suited to their taste, amidst all the delicacies of the celestial banquet. Heaven would be no heaven to them ; neither could the august assembly of which it is composed, afford them the least entertainment.

In short, as the pious and good man seeks not so much after things temporal, as things eternal, he shall, when he dies, go to the place appointed for the reception of pure and perfectly happy spirits : But those who are earthly minded, who pursue only the pleasures, riches, and honours of the present life ; and neglect to cultivate those dispositions, and to practice those virtues, which are necessary qualifications for the regions of bliss, must, in consequence of their egregious folly, be excluded hereafter from the society of celestial spirits ; and take up their everlasting abode with revolted angels, and the most miserable of human beings, in the regions

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of darkness and despair ; where is weeping and wailing, and gnashing of teeth.

Are not these considerations of vast and infinite concern ? and if these things are so, can any man make a greater discovery of his wisdom, than by frequent meditations upon, and diligent preparations for, his latter end ? On the other hand, can there be a greater instance of folly and madness in one who pretends to reason and understanding, than to live without the serious thoughts of death ; and to pursue the things of this world with as much eagerness and impetuosity, as if he was immortal upon earth ?

But this wisdom or folly of the sons of men will appear in a yet stronger light, if we consider,

II. That death will be succeeded by a solemn, impartial, and universal judgment. For as it is appointed for all men once to die, so after death comes the judgment ; which will fix them in an unalterable state, without any farther revolutions of life and death.

For

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For the manifestation of the perfections of God in the government of the world; that all the heavens may see and applaud the equity of his administration, and the whole earth confess his glory; He, the infinite, and ever adorable Being, hath appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world in righteousness, and pass an irrevocable sentence upon every man, according to his prevailing temper and character. The person appointed to conduct the solemnities of this tremendous judgment, is his own illustrious Son: whose authority, as Messiah, he supported in so wonderful and miraculous a manner; raising him at length from the dead, to shew his ability to raise others, and to give us an assurance of a general resurrection.

The season fixed upon for so awful a scene is, at the end of this world, when judgment will be noticed to the rising dead by the sound of the trumpet, by dissolving elements, and a world in flames. For the trumpet shall be blown by the divine command; and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and those of the children of men who are alive, at the coming of our Lord, shall be changed instantaneously, and  
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by the wonderful operation of the Divine power shall ascend to meet the Lord in the air, where his majestic throne shall be erected. Then shall the sun change its light for darkness, and the moon be turned into blood. The volume of heaven shall be rolled up as a scroll, and its stars shall fall from their orbs: and this earth, now so much admired for its productions, with all its splendid glories and richest ornaments of nature, or of art, shall give way to the general ruin. Surely the heart of man cannot conceive a more awful scene! Especially, if we add to the description the god-like appearance of our blessed Redeemer; who shall descend from heaven with the acclamations of angels; sit upon his throne with inconceivable solemnity, and cause all the nations of the earth to stand before him.

Is it any wonder that the wicked are represented in the word of God as terribly alarmed, and as flying from so tremendous a scene, when it first opens upon them? Can any thing be more natural, than to suppose them in wild consternation and confusion, rending the very heavens with their lamentable cries; and calling upon the mountains to fall on them, and the  
rocks

rocks to cover them from the face of that righteous and inexorable judge, whose anger they have so justly incurred, and whose wrath shall then fall upon them to the uttermost? For he shall take vengeance on them that know not God, and obey not the Gospel. — The ungodly, (whatever vain hopes they may flatter themselves with in this life) shall not stand in judgment; nor sinners in the assembly of the righteous. They shall be ranked on the left hand of the awful judge, as a token of his disapprobation, and to intimate their final separation from those whose characters will entitle them to a more honourable place. — In these circumstances; when they find themselves thus openly despised, and treated with deserved contempt before angels and men; when they behold their once poor and oppressed neighbours preferred before them; and see those very men, whom they once derided, stand firm and unmoved amidst the solemnities of judgment; “ They  
“ shall be agitated with terrible fear, and  
“ quite astonished at the greatness of their  
“ salvation. Yea, they shall repent and  
“ groan with very anguish of spirit, and  
“ say within themselves; These are the men,  
“ whom we once had in derision, and a  
“ proverb

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“ proverb of reproach. We fools account-  
 “ ed their lives madness, and their end to be  
 “ without honour. How are they now  
 “ numbered among the children of God,  
 “ and their lot is among the saints\*.” Hope-  
 less, and helpless, they shall then reflect, if  
 they never did before, on the foolish choice  
 which they made upon earth ; in prefer-  
 ring the pleasures of sin, which are only  
 for a season, to the solid pleasures of the  
 soul, and the joys of eternity. And to com-  
 plete their woe, sentence shall be pro-  
 nounced against them, in the following  
 terms : “ Depart from me, ye cursed, into  
 “ everlasting fire, prepared for the devil  
 “ and his angels.” Is it possible to conceive  
 any thing more distressing to beings, once  
 capable of immortal glory and felicity ? To  
 be hurried away from the presence of God,  
 and the Redeemer : to be separated from  
 angels, from the society of the venerable  
 prophets of the Jewish nation, from the  
 holy Apostles and martyrs of the Christian  
 church, and from all the friends of reli-  
 gion, who have lived in every age and na-  
 tion : and to take up their abode with Sa-  
 tan and his malicious associates ; who are

\* *Wisd.* v. 2, 3, 4, 5.

appointed

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appointed to be their companions in misery, and their everlasting tormentors :—How unspeakably dreadful is this !

And are not these considerations of infinite importance to us ? And ought they not to rouse the most stupid to a sense of their duty and their interest ? Can any thing be more alarming, than the representations which the scriptures give of the punishment of the wicked ; not only in the passage just mentioned, but in other texts, which I have not now time to lay before you ? I beseech you therefore, by the mercies of God ; by the generous compassion of the Redeemer ; and by a reflection upon the terrors of the Lord ; that you seriously think on these things, and heartily prepare for the solemnities of judgment : so shall you escape the punishment due to the impenitently wicked in another world ; and have the honour and happiness to dwell for ever in the assembly of the righteous.

I am here naturally led to change the scene, and to indulge more pleasing ideas ; which will be a relief to my own mind, as well as to yours. We have seen the miserable condition of careless and incorrigible

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sinners

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sinners at, and after the day of judgment. Let us now turn our thoughts to the consideration of the honour and happiness which shall be the portion of the friends of religion and virtue, and all the genuine disciples of Christ, when they come to stand before his tribunal; and when the solemnities of judgment shall be over.

The apostle assures the Thessalonians \*, that when our Lord shall be revealed from heaven to inflict deserved vengeance upon his enemies, he shall come to be glorified in the whole congregation of his saints, and to be admired in all them that believe. " That very appearance which shall make  
" him so terrible to the wicked; that flame  
" of fire, which from his presence shall  
" blaze out against them to consume them,  
" shall shine forth in the most benign and  
" friendly manner upon his servants; not  
" to destroy, but to cheer and satisfy, and re-  
" fresh them. Their bodies shall then undergo a most surprising change, and be fashioned like to the glorious body of their Redeemer, who shall openly acknowledge the poorest and meanest of his friends, be-

\* 2 *Thess.* i. 10.

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fore the inhabitants of the three regions : shall place them on his right-hand in token of his approbation and favour, wipe off all the reproaches wherewith their enemies have reproached them ; bring forth to conspicuous light all their sincere endeavours in favour of religion, and for the good and happiness of mankind : and then with an air of the highest complacency and affection, shall say unto them : “ Come, ye blessed of my father; inherit the kingdom prepared for you from before the foundation of the world.” A sentence, which will do them more honour than all the trophies, triumphal arches, or ensigns of dignity among men, could confer upon the world’s most passionate admirer, and will divinely consecrate their name and memorial to eternity.

Eternity! how pleasing will the thoughts of it be to those pure and happy souls, who, having received the forementioned sentence of applause, shall soon after accompany their reascending saviour to the realms of light ! As a drop of water to the ocean, or a grain of sand to the innumerable sands on the sea-shore, so are a thousand years to the days of eternity. And yet it is the

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good-will and pleasure of our God, that they who are wise in time, and are careful to improve the talents committed to them, shall be happy to all eternity. "The gift of God is eternal life, through Jesus Christ our Lord." — This will crown all the Joys of heaven; and make a state of bliss infinitely more blissful. What transports of joy will take place in the minds of glorified spirits in heaven, when they have surveyed the splendor and grandeur of the heavenly Jerusalem, and partook of the exalted pleasure which springs from the presence of God, and the grand assembly of spirits who surround his throne; and can say, in a firm belief and persuasion of the truth of God's promise; Thus shall it be with us for ever! Thus shall we always worship and serve God! And after millions of ages have been spent in these transporting regions, our felicity shall be as far from a conclusion, as it is now!

This shews, in the strongest light possible, the wisdom of their choice, who make heaven their portion and their home, and consider the present world only as a passage to another. For the present world passeth away, and whatever can serve to  
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the gratification of our desires in it : but they who conscientiously do the will of God, and wait for felicity till the time appointed for it is fully come, have built their hopes upon so sure a basis, that they shall abide for ever. In one word, as the wicked shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord ; so it is the will of a gracious and merciful God, that the righteous shall be forever happy in his presence, where is fulness of joy, and take up their residence at his right-hand, where are rivers of pleasure for evermore.

I am now come to a close of the second general head of discourse ; and I hope, from what has been advanced, you are sufficiently persuaded of the truth of what we have laid down ; viz. That to be truly wise, a man must be truly religious : — And that Consideration is a very proper and necessary means of obtaining this wisdom ; and more especially that branch of consideration, which exercises our thoughts upon death, and the solemnities which shall succeed it.

I was naturally led to treat of these things from the words of the text, which  
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contain a most benevolent wish, or prayer of a great and renowned prophet, than which nothing could be more agreeable to the spirit and temper of our dear friend, and his hearty concern for the true interest and happiness of his fellow creatures. And though he is now dead and you shall see his face no more in this world; you may yet suppose him speaking to you, and exhorting you in the most serious and affectionate manner, to think of, and prepare for, your latter end.

He was indeed a true friend and well-wisher to the prosperity of Zion, and the progress of piety and virtue among men: neither could he help discovering, on every proper occasion, his detestation of vice and profaneness. As he appeared to have a reverential awe of God impressed upon his own mind, nothing was more abhorrent to him, than to hear his sacred name blasphemed, or his most holy word treated in a light, or ludicrous manner. He was an example to all, in the regularity of his attendance upon the house of God, on the day appointed for his public worship and service: neither did he neglect the seasons of devotion in his family, or his closet.

In

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In younger life, when he was blest with a full and regular flow of animal spirits ; he was an able and zealous advocate for civil and religious liberty ; particularly for his right of judging for himself in matters of conscience ; which he would suffer no man to invade, restrain or abridge.

How often have I heard him speak with the highest esteem of his worthy Grandfather ; on account of his sincere piety, and his principles of religious liberty. This eminently good man was vicar of this parish in the middle of the last century, till after the Restoration ; when he gave a noble proof that his religious profession was not the result of worldly policy, by sacrificing a considerable secular interest, to preserve the peace and integrity of his own mind. Being dissatisfied with the terms of conformity, he resigned his living, in that distinguished period of Church History ; when so many faithful ministers were silenced, on account of the act of uniformity. Nevertheless (as Dr. Calamy observes) he continued preaching privately to his people so long as he lived ; which was till June 10th, 1699, when he resigned his soul into the hands of the Redeemer ; after having been  
held

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held in the highest esteem during the course of his ministry, for his wisdom and moderation ; for his serious, methodical and judicious manner of preaching, and the excellency of his life and conversation.

To proceed—may I not with justice add, in relation to our deceased friend, and fellow Christian, that he was a man of a general philanthropy and benevolence? He not only loved his family, his relations and friends ; but his good wishes and prayers extended to all men. He was merciful to those in want, and turned not away the poor from his door on account of their poverty. “ Yea, when the ear heard him, “ it often blest him ; and when the eye saw “ him, it gave witness to him : Because he “ delivered the poor that cried, and the fatherless, and him that had none to help “ him.”

In the capacity of an Attorney, few, I believe, have acquitted themselves with more integrity in their practice, nor have been more ready to give their advice to persons in distress who were not able to purchase it. Has he not delivered many who cried unto him from the gripe of their  
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oppressors? so that the blessing of him who was ready to perish came upon him.

In the latter part of life the effects of old age were indeed very visible in him: and he was an instance how much the lustre of a worthy character may be clouded by the infirmities which human nature is subject to.—But that God, who is the never-failing friend and patron of every sincere christian, has not only released him from the bonds in which he was here detained, but has, I trust, admitted him to the society of happy spirits in a separate state; where he shall joyfully wait for the morning of the resurrection.—Wearied and worn out, and full of days, it has pleased Almighty God to take him to himself: after he had exercised him with strong pain for the trial of his faith and patience, which he bore with a due submission to his will. Some of you lately beheld him burdened in his mortal tabernacle: but he is now happily released. He has left all that was mortal behind him in the grave, and is now (I trust) triumphing in the enlargement of his soul, amongst his pious ancestors.—A happiness, which he often wished and prayed for.

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Be

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Be ye therefore comforted with these hopes : (I address myself to the surviving family of the deceased.) You have no reason to mourn like those who are disconsolate ; but rather to weep as if you wept not, when you reflect upon the happy difference which you have reason to believe Death has made in his situation and circumstances. Have you not long seen him (as it were) dragging the chain of life ; compassed about with infirmities, and sorely afflicted with pain ? And have you not good ground to believe, that he is now eased and comforted, and out of the reach of pain, sickness or death ?—Be ye therefore consoled with the thoughts of his felicity ; and with the hopes of going to him, and dwelling with him for ever in the realms of light.

Farther, when you consider that you have been deprived, by the stroke of death, either of a Husband, or a Father ; look up to God with a firm reliance on his fidelity ; who has promised to be a husband of the widow and the father of the fatherless. A promise, from which (if properly applied) you will derive the surest, and most lasting support and comfort.

Give

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Give me leave more especially to add a word of advice to you, my young friends, the offspring of pious parents, and descended from pious ancestors.—Your father's eyes are now closed in death, to awake no more, till the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised. Fix your earnest attention then upon your surviving parent. Remember that the comfort of your mother's life will in a great measure depend upon your behaviour. Continue your dutiful affection to her, and your love and tender regard for each other.—Be sincere and devout in your transactions with the ever-adorable God, the God of your fathers, and serve him with a perfect heart, and a willing mind. In all your ways acknowledge your constant and absolute dependence upon him, and he shall direct your paths through the wilderness of this world: and when, through his safe conduct, and powerful assistance, you arrive at the celestial Canaan; He shall kindly introduce you to the society of those worthy progenitors, whose memory you must ever honour, must ever love; and appoint you to dwell with them in everlasting abodes of light.—O what honour! what power! what riches! what happiness has God laid

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up in store for you! Be faithful unto death, and all shall be yours. Be not weary in well-doing; for in due season ye shall reap if ye faint not.

And now, my friends, give me leave, at the conclusion of this discourse, to address you all, with the most serious and affectionate concern for your eternal welfare. O that you were wise: that you understood this: that you would consider your latter end! Would you find death disarmed of its terrors, when you pass through his territories into an eternal state? would you find the separation of the soul from the body, a happy release from all that is sorrowful and afflictive, and an introduction to a new and eternal life? let me entreat you immediately, without any farther delay, to seek after wisdom; who is easily perceived of them that love her, and found of those who seek her in sincerity: who even preventeth them that desire her instructions, and meeteth them in every thought. Trespas no longer upon the patience of God: lest in righteous judgment he cut you off from the land of the living, and the things which belong to your peace be for ever hid from your eyes. Time is short,

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short, the world, with all the pleasing scenes it affords, is vanity; and death steals upon us every moment; and may put an end to our day of grace before we are aware of his approaches; or have space sufficient to bid our friends a last adieu. In the midst of life we are in death; neither can we boast ourselves of to-morrow, for we know not what a day may bring forth. But few of the sons of men live to the age of our deceased friend; who had entered upon his 75th year when he left the world. What multitudes of the human species daily quit the stage, and enter upon an eternal state, to give an account of themselves to God, before that period! And is this to be wondered at? is it not rather wonderful, considering the curious frame of the body, and the diseases and accidents to which we are continually exposed, that we should live so long as we do upon earth? For what is our life? 'tis only a little breath in the nostrils: the momentary pulsation of the heart. And how soon may this pulse be stopped? by what various means may this breath be taken away? and then we die, and return to our dust.

Think

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Think on these things, ye careless and inconsiderate mortals; who have hitherto been strangers to serious thought and reflection, and have lived as unconcerned about futurity, as if you were invulnerable by the arrows of death, or had nothing to fear or hope beyond the grave. "Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts, and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him\*." And once more (as an incitement to a diligent improvement of your time and talents) often ponder that excellent advice of the Wise Man, "Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might: for there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom in the grave whither thou goest,†" and where we must all shortly arrive.

Finally, let every wise and good man comfort himself with this consideration: That though death is continually depriving him of one or other of his friends and acquaintance; and he himself shall not be excused; but must soon follow those who are gone before him: yet eternal truth has assured

\* *Isa.* lv. 7.

† *Eccles.* ix, 10.

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us, there shall be a general resurrection of the dead ; when all those who have lived a holy and good life upon earth, shall have a joyful meeting with their Saviour, and one another ; and be glorified in their whole persons both in body and soul. “ For this corruptible, says the Apostle, must “ put on incorruption ; and this mortal “ must put on immortality. So when this “ corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on “ immortality, then shall be brought to “ pass that remarkable saying which is written in the book of Isaiah’s prophecy ; “ Death is swallowed up in victory.” In the prospect of this great deliverance and salvation, let the sons of God triumph even now in those animated words of St. Paul. — “ O Death ! where is thy sting ? “ O Grave ! where is thy victory ? The “ sting of death is sin ; and the strength of “ sin is the law. But thanks be to God, who giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ\*.

\* 1 Cor. xv. 53, 54, 55, 56, 57.

F I N I S.

...shall be a general resurrection  
...when all those who have  
...and good will have  
...with their bodies and  
...and be glorified in their  
...bodies; and the bodies of the  
...corruptible shall be  
...on incorruption; and this mortal  
...on immortality. So when this  
...shall have put on incorruption  
...and this mortal shall have put on  
...shall be brought to  
...the corruptible is taking which is writ-  
...in the book of life; and the  
...is followed up in victory." In  
...of this great deliverance and  
...of God triumph  
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...O Death! where is thy sting?  
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...of death is fear; and the triumph of  
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